

The Eagle Who Built the Bridge

By Jean Follmer



3rd from right John Wilcox

Photo provided

During his sophomore year at Acalanes High School, Life Scout John Wilcox became ready to fly with the Eagles. Although he was ready to join the elite rank, he had a big decision to make. John had to decide what he wanted to do for his Eagle Project; the act that would enable him to finally become an Eagle Scout.

After being a Boy Scout for over 10 years, John wanted to do something big. He said, "I joined Cub Scouts in the 1st grade at Springhill. I stayed in (Boy Scouts) because of the public service, hiking and camping." It was during an act of public service that John discovered the path to his Eagle Project. John said that he and some fellow Boy Scouts "were rebuilding a trail in Briones when I learned of several opportunities." It turned out that several Bay Area sites were in need of pedestrian bridges and the prospect of building one appealed to John. He chose to build a 25 foot pedestrian bridge near a picnic site on the old Mangini Ranch property near Mt. Diablo. The land is currently owned by Save Mt. Di-

ablo and it is scheduled to be given to the California State Park system.

Building a bridge isn't your typical Eagle Project. In fact, the magnitude of the project raised some initial questions. John said "You have to get approval from your Troop Leader and an Eagle Advisor." He said both men wanted to make sure he was going to be able to complete the project before they approved it. He assured them he would finish and they granted their approval. John moved on to securing all of the funding, materials and labor. He was lucky enough to have the structural engineering donated by his parents, Craig and Karen Wilcox, both engineers. John said, "I sent out donation packets to local construction (and related) companies." He had a great response from local companies such as Hardy Investments, MWH Engineers, Overaa Construction, Peacock Construction and Piedmont Lumber.

John was joined at the site by eight friends and fellow Boy Scouts. Although John had done a lot of the prep-work with two

friends (which included cutting, drilling and pouring the foundation), the bridge still needed to be completely constructed. Getting started was a challenge since they had to slide the beams down the steep embankment which leads to Galindo Creek. John said his Eagle Project enabled most of the boys to earn some of their community service hours required by both Boy Scouts and Acalanes High School. Approximately 240 hours of work went into the bridge project.

Although the Mangini Ranch property is not yet open to the public, you will have an opportunity to cross John's bridge on August 10 from 9am-12pm, when Save Mt. Diablo volunteer David Ogden will lead a 2-3 mile hike on Save Mt. Diablo's Mangini Ranch property. In addition to crossing John's bridge, organizers say the hike will include newly constructed trails through some of the property's most beautiful areas. Great views and rare plants are emphasized. For more information, contact David Ogden at davidogden@sbcglobal.net.